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SAMSON (G. W.)

ADDRESS

AT

THE OPENING OF THE HALL

PRESENTED BY

W. W. CORCORAN

TO

THE COLUMBIAN COLLEGE,

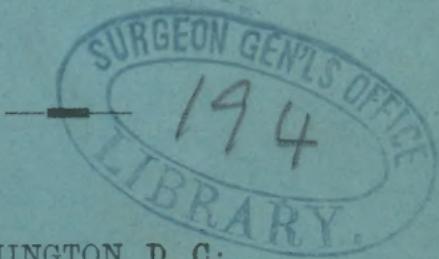
FOR THE USE OF

THE NATIONAL MEDICAL COLLEGE.

DELIVERED

By G. W. SAMSON, D. D., PRESIDENT,

Washington, D. C., Thursday, Nov. 1, 1866.



WASHINGTON, D. C.:

MCGILL & WITHEROW, PRINTERS AND STEREOTYPERs.

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On the evening of Thursday, November 1, 1866, the exercises attending the Forty-Fifth Annual Opening of the National Medical College, a Department of the Columbian College, Washington, D. C., were held at the Hall, on H street, between Thirteenth and Fourteenth streets; erected by W. W. Corcoran, for an Apprentices' Library and Lecture-Room, and lately presented to the College for the use of the Medical Faculty. After prayer by Rev. Dr. Pinckney, of the Church of the Ascension, the Dedicatory Address was delivered by G. W. Simson, D. D., President of the Columbian College, to a full and appreciative audience. The Address was followed by the presenting of the keys of the Hall, on the part of Col. J. L. Edwards, President of the Board of Trustees, to the representative of the Medical Faculty. In the absence of Dr. Thomas Miller, the senior Professor, the keys were received by Prof. George C. Schaeffer, M. D., who read an introductory Lecture, setting forth the necessity of endowments to Institutions designed for practical instruction in Medical Science.

ADDRESS.

Gentlemen, Trustees, and Medical Faculty of the Columbian College:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: It is made my duty, on behalf of the giver and receivers, to welcome you, one and all, to this hall in its new appropriation; an edifice as chaste, though rich, as the heart and hand that gave it, and as substantial, though unpretending, as the men that accept the trust and pledge themselves to make its new mission a worthy one.

The history of this building is an epitome of the ends for which we as men were made, and of the objects for which, each in our sphere, we should live. Designed originally by the gentleman who erected it as a gathering-place such as those which have given their charm and glory to Athens, Florence, London, and Paris in their best days, as a popular Lecture Hall, in which the mass of men, devoted daily to honorable toil, may assemble for evening mental improvement, having its gallery for collections in art, and its audience-room for popular lectures, it has had a comprehensive mission, such as its projector little dreamed of for it. To this palatial structure, in the time of need, the children in the Common Schools were invited, and the greatest boon to both parents and children, a thorough rudimentary education, was here furnished. When the Christian day, for the highest spiritual improvement of man in his culminating intellectual life came round, these walls were, with the same liberal views, permitted to echo the

high praises of Jehovah, and to reflect the still, small voice of His words of truth and grace to the ear and heart. When war with its carnage came, out of the very Aceldama of shattered hopes, of crushed aspirations, and of mangled nobleness of nature, the spirit of humanity and love for truth and goodness made seeming evil here conspire to good, and for five years men of science and of comprehensive charity transformed the charnel-house into a chastened and adorned *temple*, in which science has lingered with subdued, yet intensely earnest spirit, to learn how her skill may hereafter better aid suffering humanity; erecting thus, too, a *shrine* where true patriotism, with aching breast and throbbing heart, might ponder the cost of human advancement and of a nation's developed greatness and usefulness; and consecrating, most of all, a *sanctuary*, before whose altar Christian faith might look beyond the bounds of time, and grasp as a real home the eternal abode, the everlasting kingdom of all those who count it honor to suffer the loss of their all out of love to God and to His creatures. And now, hallowed by all these associations in the past, this edifice passes to the hands of a class of men whose private studies are the profoundest science, whose active life is the broadest charity, and who, of all men, should be the servants of humanity in all its needs, and of the Author of human existence in all His holy purposes.

The ends for which we have been made, as the profoundest of thinkers have agreed, are the *true* sought by *science*, the *beautiful* aspired after in *art*, the *good* developed in the material and spiritual products of what is termed *civilization*, and the *right*, the principle which reconciles all our impulses to the reign of our Divine Creator, and gives sweet conformity in all our acts to the obligations which our varied social, domestic, civil, and political relations to our fellow-men impose. The study of these laws in their appli-

cations to our higher intellectual, social, and religious life belongs to men devoted to science proper, to art, to jurisprudence, and to the Christian ministry; while to the medical profession alone belongs the entire duty of learning and applying those same laws in their bearing on the welfare of the body, which is the soul's tenement.

In acquiring the knowledge and skill necessary to the successful medical practitioner, the methods of true science must be followed; the young student, with a mind before trained to habits of analysis and logical deduction, learning to master the principles established as true in the experience of men of the past; while the advanced professor still continues to examine and re-examine facts often or occasionally occurring, combining them anew by his own powers of classification, and striving to find some new, not *novel*, phase of old opinions, or some added law developed under new circumstances. In successful practice of the medical profession, the intense and concentrated life-labor of true philosophy and art is indispensable; no hasty guess work or tardy discussion of a principle, which should before have been known as established, being allowed to disturb the mind's calm balance, and to make the "double-minded man unstable" in the emergency of the sick room; and no bungling of unpracticed hand or unsteadiness of nerve, coming from vicious personal habits, being allowed to defile the sanctuary in which the man intrusted with the lives of his fellow-men should always feel himself to be moving.

Above all, in the medical profession, that principle to which this Hall was originally devoted, and is still to be dedicated, that of a popular audience-room, as well as of a professional lecture-room, is worthy of special consideration. In no department of human science and art, entered by genius and made glorious by high attainment, has this principle long been lost

sight of. Art never reached in old Greece, the land of art, its acme of perfection, until both its principles and its practice were made to enter into the rudimentary training of youth in the common schools; when even the majestic genius of Phidias and the proud aspiring of Parrhasius had to submit its work to the popular vote for approval; and when an Apelles, prince of all artists, meekly and wisely exposed his pictures to passers-by in the window of his studio, and followed the cobbler's suggestion, who criticized the sandal in his painting. The science of Government and Laws never reached its practical embodiment, as Cicero argues, until, following the hint of the artist's training, he himself, with the other boys of Rome, learned at the public schools to repeat the "Twelve Tables," so that these boys, grown to be men, when he delivered his orations and penned his letters and dialogues, could scan with intelligent and varied experience his philosophic statements; out of which combination of many minds the glory of the Roman Republic was consummated, with its finishing-touch like to that of Apellean art in its maturest perfection. Who admits not that religious truth never reaches such theoretic harmony of development, and such practical power in the life, as it attains in men and women trained, either in the Sabbath school or in the family, to read the attractive histories, and treasure the transcendent precepts of the Christian Revelation; whose minds, after the maturity of years, and whose hearts amid the intense agitations of human passion, show by their readily-moulded sentiments and by their gently-controlled impulses that the Gospel is "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation." And can it be that the mission of the medical profession is exceptional to that of the artist, the statesman, the Christian preacher? When the man of true medical science moves about among his fellow-beings, wrapped up in the mystery of his

superior knowledge, never imparting to those around him any insight into his profound skill, will they appreciate him as truly as when they know enough of his profession to see how little they know? Will the intelligent people of any community patronize most the man whom they dread as a magician, or the man whose mind and heart open to them in genial confidence and sympathy, like a rose full-blown, lavish of its fragrance? Greece reached the culminating era of the appreciation given by her people to every art when Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle set the example to men of every profession of mingling freely with the people, seeking to make them understand their own wants, and the supply of their needs which the several professions were prepared to afford. May not the medical profession take on a yet higher dignity, when by popular presentation of the laws which induce or avert malady, it furnishes the means of preventing, as well as the specifics for curing disease? As it marked an era in the history of social progress in France, when, roused by the spirit of popular revolution, the best men of France took the chairs of popular lecturers, which they have not yet vacated, and opened a door of access to the great heart of the people, which has made galleries of art, halls of legislation, and even the sittings of the French Academy itself to become the privilege of any inquiring mind, so may it not be an era when popular lectures by medical men shall enable an inquiring people to see enough of the wondrous mechanism intrusted to the physician's care to make them appreciate the skill that can restore again to healthful action its deranged functions? When every school for youth of both sexes is making the rudiments of anatomy, physiology, and hygiene a class study, the suggestion of this particular development of the idea of the donor of this edifice may well claim consideration.

GENTLEMEN OF THE MEDICAL FACULTY: To your

care is now mainly committed the responsibility of making this noble gift worthy of the donor, of the College, of the Federal city, and of yourselves.

The memory of your older members laps over the entire history for nearly a half century, forty-five years in all, since, in 1821, the Medical Department of the College began, with the oversight of the able and esteemed Thomas Sewall; whose memory still lingers in a remembrance more hallowed than that of men occupying the highest positions of trust among us. Those were men to whom our national authorities did homage; giving them in high trust the only Infirmary built by the National Treasury, to meet a national demand. All they attempted in honor of the science of your profession; all they labored for in humane devotion to the welfare of suffering hundreds, sojourning at this centre of many withering hopes, you are still in their stead to undertake. More than this, in the popular demand and popular supply, to which this structure was first dedicated, you are to share. May the high resolve with which you enter this Temple of Medical Science and of Healing Art be ever uppermost as you fill these chairs; and may a wisdom and energy that come from Him "whose we are and whom we ought to serve," ever aid your hallowed endeavor!

GENTLEMEN OF THE TRUSTEES: Yours is the more general care and responsibility of guarding for others the trust executed by these gentlemen of the medical profession while imparting to others their gift. Made up as your body in part is of men of science and of literary culture, in part also of men of tried wisdom, prudence, and integrity in business circles, it is yours to watch for the fidelity and to encourage the devotion of the men to whom you give in charge this public trust. None but college officers know how much this mutual relation, calling for mutual confidence and encouragement, implies. The long years

during which most of you have exercised this self-denying watch-care, the success that has attended your judicious administration, may perchance repay you in declining years with a satisfaction more precious than gold, more ennobling than place and power; in the conviction that, even if, in your individual aims, you have added little to treasures that will live after you, in your public trust you have garnered enduring riches.

Mr. CORCORAN: On behalf of these Trustees and this Faculty, in accepting your confided trust, I thank you for the gift of this Hall. There is no fitness in eulogy for one whose life and works speak everywhere of their devotion. It would be doing violence to all our feelings, however, were not a reference made to these deeds of munificence on an occasion like this. Through a life yet, we trust, to be greatly prolonged, what cause, among those ends for which men ought to wish to live, is there that your bounty has not adorned? The *true* in *science*, the *beautiful* in *art*, the *good* in a thousand *charities*, the *right* in human and Divine *relations*, has shared your thought, your affection, and your liberal patronage. Without men like you, we men devoted to the training of youth, to the counseling of men of riper years, to the earthly and heavenly interests of our needy fellow-men, without men of your powers to acquire wealth, and your heart to use it, from love to man and love to God, we could not fulfill our several missions. Your private benefactions, known only to a few made necessarily the almoners of your bounty, have enshrined your memory in a thousand hearts; and more would weep at your departure from among us than would mourn when princes and senators end their career. Religion owes many a stone in her sacred shrines, reared by Christ's true followers of many a name, to your benefactions. Art lingers around that proud monument, so well-nigh its capstone finish, and prays,

as we pray, that you may long live to make it all your munificence has desired. Hospitals and asylums for the sick and the fatherless repeat, from the lips of quick-succeeding recipients, a blessing on your charity; and, as long as the city of Washington rears its proud domes to speak of our National Union, the widow and the fatherless will be fed and clothed out of your store-house. Science owes to you her meed of grateful remembrance; for the sacrificing care of the infancy of the Columbian College, committed in part to your revered father, Thomas Corcoran, among the trusted few original corporators, has not been forgotten by you as his successor. May this edifice, bearing your name and his, more than realize, in our charge, all the hopes which prompted you to its erection.

Mr. CORCORAN: The true, the beautiful, the good, have been in your mind and heart as studies and as objects for which you have wished to live. We who know you well, we your fellow-citizens, and thousands of true men in every portion of our own land, as well as in more than one country of Europe—we know that, if there is in our midst a pure, high-minded lover and earnest seeker of the *right*, in all the relations of social and civil life, among that number will live, perpetually admired, the name of W. W. Corcoran. Trained in such a comprehensive school as are the citizens of Washington, living near enough to them to appreciate the real excellence of our public men, whose faults alone too often reach the public ear at a distance, the older residents of this city have ever proved themselves to be among the most intelligent, impartial, and trustworthy of the true friends of American popular government. Linked as they are by ties of blood and of neighborhood to both extremes of our extended country, they have naturally, during the years of civil conflict, been watched with a jealous eye, and tried by a just, though severe scrutiny.

Now that the night of the tempest of human passion is dawning towards the morning, the calm, equal judgment of quiet, practical men in this city, men who spent sleepless nights *before* the conflict in meditating remonstrance, and who then, with that "peace beyond all earthly dignities, a still and quiet conscience," when arms were clashing, sought, as patriots, as philanthropists, as Christians, to do what their Divine Master, "who went about doing good," would himself have done—that earnest aspiration to think, to feel, and to do right becomes more and more recognized, appreciated, and approved; verifying Paul's declaration in his statement to the Romans of their duty as citizens under kindred circumstances at that ancient capital: "He that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God and approved of men." Among those thus "approved of men," your name, Mr. Corcoran, begins now to shine, as before it ever has shone, conspicuous. Among those "acceptable to God," whose truth is perfect wisdom, whose beauty is spotless holiness, whose goodness is fatherly love, and whose righteousness spared not His own Son in sacrifice for us, may we all appear, when from our mission of truth, beauty, goodness, and righteousness we together stand in our final account.

MR. CORCORAN, GENTLEMEN OF THE TRUSTEES, AND MEDICAL FACULTY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, CITIZENS AND SOJOURNERS OF WASHINGTON: This Hall, on your behalf, in the presence of God and of these His witnesses, is now dedicated to the cause of Him who, while he "spake as never man spake," also labored as none ever toiled, that He might bless the bodies as well as the spirits of suffering men. May He accept our consecration, and give to us, each in our several spheres, His wisdom and grace, that we may be faithful in our trust, even unto death.

